

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A network interface, comprising:
 - 2 a plurality of physical ports, including one primary and at
 - 3 least one secondary port and each providing corresponding activity
 - 4 status signals and a main port having said physical address;
 - 5 a data multiplexer connected to said plurality of physical
 - 6 ports for selectively providing a data flow between said main port
 - 7 and a selected one of said primary and secondary ports according to
 - 8 a control signal; and
 - 9 a controller connected to said data multiplexer for selecting
 - 10 which port provides data flow to and from said main port, further
 - 11 including
 - 12 a management control adapted to receive control signals
 - 13 from a host machine and including a timer for providing an
 - 14 output signal at an interval programmable according to said
 - 15 host machine control signals,
 - 16 a link activity detector connected to receive said
 - 17 primary and secondary port activity status signals and provide
 - 18 a corresponding signals to said management control, wherein
 - 19 said management control timer is further responsive to
 - 20 the selective one of said primary and secondary port activity
 - 21 status signals to begin a programmed interval, and said
 - 22 management control further includes logic means to provide
 - 23 said multiplexer control signal upon receipt of said timer

24 output signal and the presence of data activity of a non-
25 selected port, whereupon said multiplexer provides connection
26 between said main port and said non-selected port.

1 2. The Network Interface of claim 1, further including an
2 operator host machine for communicating with said management logic.

1 3. The Network Interface of claim 2, wherein said host machine
2 further includes an applet providing selected operator control of
3 said management logic.

1 4. The Network Interface of claim 3, wherein said host machine
2 applet includes a GUI providing said selected operator control.

1 5. The Network Interface of claim 1, wherein said timer interval
2 is programmable between 1 to 32 seconds, inclusive.

1 6. A software multi-port control system for a local machine
2 having an operating system, comprising:

3 a configuration manager applet operable to configure a multi-
4 port network interface controllable by a specific local machine;
5 and

6 a multi-port network interface driver program operable by said
7 operating system responsive to a network interface card having
8 selectable multiple physical ports to selectively provide data to

9 and receive data from a selected port of said network interface
10 card according to a control signal; and
11 a programmable timer responsive to data flow through said
12 selected port, for providing said control signal according to a
13 time interval programmable by said applet.